



East Foot Eden

University of Greenwich Department of Architecture and Landscape:

Works 2015

East of Eden: Blatant Local- ism

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East of Eden is a design research project that encompasses the creative output of the entire Department of Architecture and Landscape at the University of Greenwich; from year one to post-graduate and across all the architecture and landscape programmes. Initiated to mark the Departments move into its new Stockwell Street building in the heart of Greenwich, the project marks a new beginning for the Department of Architecture and Landscape and, hopefully, the start of a long and fruitful relationship with our new surroundings.

Three sites were the focus of all design projects undertaken in the Department this academic year, chosen through a mix of fortuitous circumstance, university connections and at the invitation of interested groups. The project name comes from the fact that these sites (East Greenwich, the Greenwich Peninsula and Thamesmead) are situated to the east of the 'Edenic' maritime campus. Alongside all of the design projects, much of the written theory work has engaged with the histories and cultures of the site, and the technical studies have responded to the physical conditions and limitations of the sites.

For each of the sites, the Department is working in parallel to an external partner that represents a different approach to the development of the area. In East Greenwich we are working with East Greenwich residents and the Greenwich society; on the Peninsula we are principally working with the Hong Kong based developers Knight Dragon and at Thamesmead we are working with Peabody Housing Trust. These three groups have very different agendas, priorities and interests, however collectively they could be said to encapsulate many of the vested interests that are driving the development of the contemporary city. With this debate as the backdrop it has provided the perfect context for developing student projects and for embedding ourselves in our new home.

East Greenwich is clearly of interest due to its immediate proximity to the Maritime campus, starting at the East Gate of the Old Royal Naval College and stretching down to the Blackwall Tunnel Approach, forming a corridor bounded by the Thames on its northern

Introduction

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East of Eden sites (West > East): East Greenwich, Greenwich Peninsula, Thamesmead

edge and by the southeastern train line on the southern edge. For many years this part of Greenwich has been rather neglected in contrast to the Greenwich Town Centre and the World Heritage site. However the rate of development in East Greenwich means it is experiencing major transformations both physically (through the introduction of an array of new developments), and socially (with the erosion of what was once a solidly working class area). While gentrification may have major commercial benefits, questions concerning the rich diversity of the current population and the preservation of the areas industrial heritage are very much uncertain.

The Peninsula was once a thriving site of industrial innovation/toxic wasteland (depending on the source), and has literally undergone a re-birth since the decision to site the Millennium Dome there. Now its future as one London's largest gated communities beckons with up to 50,000 new residents planned over the next fifteen years. With increased commercial development proposed, including a new Ikea store, there seems to have been little thought for additional infrastructure - transport links and the local education system will be severely tested.

Thamesmead is one of the UK's most iconic post-war housing estates. For some, it has come to exemplify many of the negatives of post-war social housing. It is often viewed as the archetypal modernist dystopia, and as such used in films such as A Clockwork Orange, videos such as Aphex Twin's 'Come To Daddy' and a plethora of Police and TV drama series.

Thamesmead was recently acquired by the Peabody Trust; an organisation that has strong links with the University of Greenwich through the Universities Pro Chancellor and Chair of Court, Stephen Howlett, who is also CEO of Peabody. With Thamesmead, Peabody are faced with the twin goals of refurbishing the existing stock and developing an ambitious expansion programme of new housing. These ambitions will be greatly aided by the new Cross Rail link, and Peabody's goal is to provide long term sustainable development,

though it is clear that the scale and complexity of Thamesmead will push Peabody's resources and ingenuity. A question remains to be answered - who will this new Thamesmead actually be for?

By setting projects in these three sites, students have been required to explicitly engage with the local area in a number of important ways; first to develop a social, cultural and physical analysis of their site; second to ask questions about the forces that drive the development of the city in 21st century; third to speculate upon a range of strategies that might suggest an inclusive agenda for urban growth. However perhaps the most important goal for the East of Eden project has been to provide an exciting and provocative range of alternative proposals, from practical approaches to housing and streetscape, to more esoteric musings on progressive technology and new forms of social action and organisation.

One feature common to all of these sites is the belief that their development needs to be wholly reliant on the market - it would seem that any attempt to promote urban growth requires an uncritical acceptance of neo liberal financial mechanisms. This wholly uncritical view, that only the market can be the effective agent of change, is not just something that is confined to London and the UK, it has become an accepted policy for most global development. What has emerged from many of the student projects is a questioning of that assumption as it becomes clear that for a new generation of designers the qualitative nature of the city is more important than the financial imperatives of the market. While many may consider that naive, what it suggests is that many young architects and landscape architects are seeing themselves as active agents of a new social agenda that sees an ethical approach to resources and the environment as a major priority.

East of Eden: Strategies and Tactics

The move to Stockwell Street has given the Department of Architecture and Landscape an extraordinary opportunity to be at the centre of one of the main growth areas in London, and to develop vital links within this context as part of its intellectual, social and cultural remit. Departments of Architecture and Landscape are often insular and hermetic places, but at Greenwich we are looking beyond the walls of the institution and engaging with those people who will be affected by the architecture and landscape architecture of the future as well as those people affecting that change. The Department is in a unique position to work with a wide constituency of interests from politicians, developers and professionals, to local residents and private stakeholders. Because of our situation, we have the luxury to be able to take a longer-term view of the histories and the futures of the area, indeed we have a pedagogical and ideological obligation to operate at this level.

During the year the Department has hosted a number of events as part of the East of Eden programme to connect with this wider

constituency: 'Downstream: Actions, Interventions, Infrastructures' was a joint workshop between Greenwich Landscape students and Milan Polytechnic; '24 Hour East of Eden' an urban design 'charrette' marking the Stockwell Street buildings official opening; 'Re-Imagining Ikea' a workshop organised with year one architecture students and the 'East of Eden Works in Progress' exhibition that ran in the Stockwell Street Project Space alongside the annual Future Cities conference. The Department also hosted three conferences and a series of open weekly lectures. Part of the planning obligations of Stockwell Street was to promote community engagement and that is exactly what the Department has been seeking to achieve.

What these events were trying to initiate was a series of open dialogues within the Department, between the Department and the rest of the university, and with the wider public - to question what is happening in those areas close to the University and ask what alternatives are available or even possible. We believe that Stockwell Street should be a focus for local debate and engagement.

As part of the remit to make connections outside of the University, a number of interested parties have been asked to contribute to this publication. As well as Knight Dragon and Peabody, we have contributions from former Greenwich MP Nick Raynsford, local historian Mary Mills, resident and architectural critic Owen Hatherley, sculptor Richard Wilson, local resident and activist Ian Worley, as well as contributions from architectural practices who have all worked in the area and have strong connections to the Department; AHMM, ALL Design, Barr Gazetas, John Lyall and Wilkinson Eyre. Mark Morris, an academic based in Cornell University in New York, has also kindly allowed us to reprint part of his essay on the Stockwell Street building originally published in Log magazine.

The form of this book consciously breaks away from the standard model of the end-of-year catalogue, in much the same way that the East of Eden project differs from the standard programme in a Department of Architecture and Landscape - first by representing a focused and coherent set of projects that attempt to look in greater depth at a single set of sites and issues, and secondly where more conventional catalogues are predicated on only giving a glimpse of the what the Department is doing, at Greenwich we are looking to present work in depth with half of the pages made up of showcases of individual student work. The intention of showing work in this detail, across a range of years and programmes, comes from a belief that a diversity of ideas is the life blood of a healthy Department, and this can only be demonstrated by showing work in depth.

With the publication of this book we hope that East of Eden will be seen as the first phase of a project that will establish the Department of Architecture and Landscape as a key part of Greenwich's cultural life. We also hope it will constitute a significant contribution to the local area and to a wider national debate around the future of our cities.

The Soil City

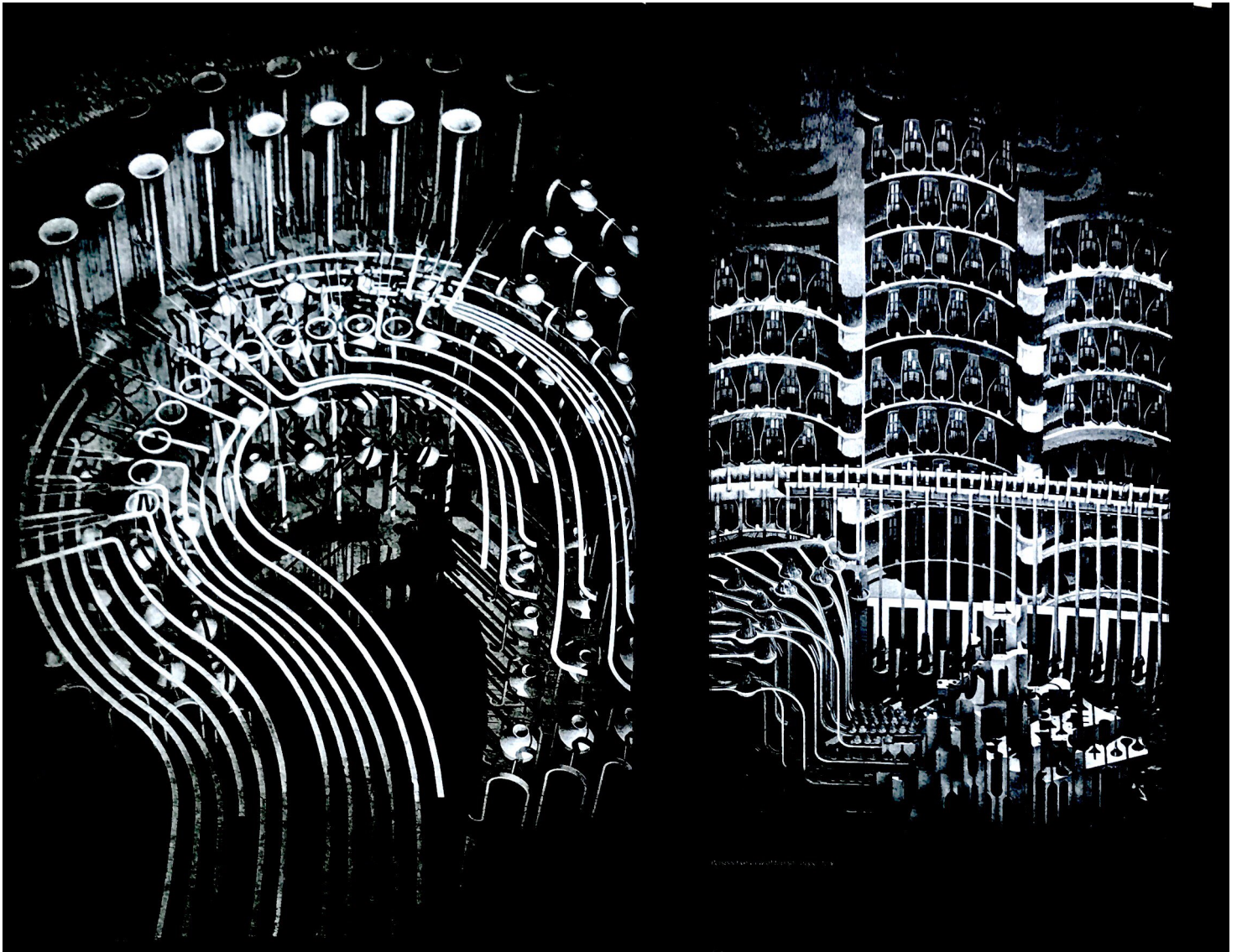
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MArch Architecture Unit 20

Tutors: Max Dewdney & James A. Craig (+ Dr Shaun Murray, Thesis)

The Soil City project imagines a future city set in the next century, in an era where the once abundant natural resource of top soil has reached near-extinction. Soil City imagines a new society that has embarked on the momentous task of cultivating and protecting the scarce levels of remaining top soil. It is a society structured around high soil values, where the wealthy store miniature gardens in an extensive series of vaults running underneath a centralised soil bank, and where large groups of workers dredge through the vast domestic waste dumping grounds on the periphery of the Greenwich Peninsula in an attempt to speed up the process of soil production. Whilst the project celebrates all things soil, it is also mired in a certain doom – an end to the natural growth of things. Soil City takes a critical stance on the dissolution of natural resources and on the impending high value market and profiteering associated with its demise.





East of Eden

Edited by Nic Clear

East of Eden is a design research project that seeks to reimagine three areas in the Royal Borough of Greenwich - East Greenwich, Greenwich Peninsula and Thamesmead - as case studies for the development of London in the 21st century.

The entire student cohort of the University of Greenwich Department of Architecture and Landscape were involved in the project, all working on one of the three sites. This book documents this work, and includes articles from members of staff and external contributors who are passionately involved in the development of the area.

Contributors include: *Nick Raynsford, Mark Morris, Ian Worley, AHMM, Simon Withers, Knight Dragon, ALL Design, James A. Craig, Peabody Trust, Barr Gazetas, Owen Hatherley, John Lyall, Mary Mills, Wilkinson Eyre, Richard Wilson.*

ISBN: 978-1-909155-09-1